

# Plant Fact Sheet

## AMERICAN CRANBERRYBUSH

*Viburnum opulus* L. var. *americanum* Ait.

Plant Symbol = VIOPA2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Herman, D.E. et al. 1996  
North Dakota Tree Handbook  
@ PLANTS

### Alternate Names

*Viburnum opulus* L.ssp. *trilobum* (Marsh.) Clausen,  
*Viburnum trilobum* Marsh., highbush cranberry

### Uses

**Wildlife:** American cranberrybush is a good wildlife food and cover plant for small mammals and birds. Twigs are eaten by deer, moose and beaver. Fruits are a staple winter food for ruffed grouse and are eaten sparingly by pheasants and at least five species of songbirds. Humans find the fruit tart but edible and excellent as a preserve or sauce.

**Erosion Control:** The shrub is useful as a medium tall hedge or border for screening or a windbreak.

**Landscaping:** It is an attractive flowering landscape plant for use in odd areas or in group plantings around homes and farm ponds. The fruit is a bright red which increases its ornamental value. Combined, its characteristics make it useful as a dual purpose food plant and ornamental.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Description

*Viburnum trilobum* Marsh., American cranberrybush is an erect native shrub, averaging in height from 6 to 10 feet, occasionally taller on good sites. The plants are multi-stemmed but do not form thickets by spreading. They are dense shrubs because of close branching. The leaves are opposite, 3-lobed maple-like leaves and from 2 to 5 inches long. In the fall the leaves become scarlet. The creamy-white flowers, which appear in late May and early June, measure 3 to 4 inches across. Each bloom is composed of an outer ring of large sterile flowers and an inner ring of tiny fertile ones. The fruit, which ripens in September and October, resembles the true cranberry in size and color but is more translucent when ripe. Fruit hangs on the branches all winter.

### Adaptation and Distribution

American cranberrybush is adapted throughout the Northeast, although distribution is widely scattered throughout much of its range. It is found growing in well-drained, imperfectly drained, and poorly drained, but not droughty soils. Soil pH is not critical, but for best results soil should be reasonably fertile.

American cranberrybush is distributed throughout the northern states. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

### Establishment

Establish hedges or block plantings by using bare root or container grown stock. Plant 2 year old nursery seedlings. If planting your own seed, it takes 2 years for them to germinate.

Plant Materials <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

Plant Fact Sheet/Guide Coordination Page <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/pfs.html>>

National Plant Data Center <<http://npdc.usda.gov>>

When establishing a planting, prepare a good bed by plowing a few furrows, or by removing at least 4 square feet of sod for each plant. For the first 2 years, either cultivate, weed, or mulch with straw, hay, or sawdust to control competition. During the early years of establishment remove all competing vegetation.

As a wildlife border along the edge of woods, plant the American cranberrybush one or two rows between the open fields and the trees. Space each plant 5 or 6 feet apart. As a hedge where a medium-tall screen is desired, plant 2 rows 2 feet apart with staggered spacing or 1 row with 1 foot spacing. In an odd area or group planting around a pond, plant in the center or behind low growing shrubs. Full growth of the shrub requires 5 to 10 years.

### **Pests and Potential Problems**

This plant has no serious pests.

### **Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

‘Compactum’, ‘Andrews’, ‘Hahs’, and ‘Wentworth.’ Plants are available at commercial hardwood nurseries.

### **Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**

*USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program*

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site<<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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